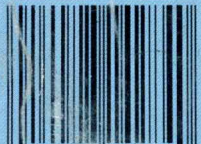


# Yachting

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## BOAT SHOW ISSUE



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Yachting

Retailers: Notice of display allowance plan is within last three pages.



# In The Santa Barbara Channel



**San Miguel, Santa Rosa,  
Santa Cruz and Anacapa remain wild,  
untouched havens for cruising...with a permit**

**By NANCY BARRON**





Chart by R. Anderson

Arch rock on the previous page is a 100-foot natural bridge on the extreme eastern end of Anacapa. Cathedral Rock (right), on Anacapa, offers safe landing and access to the island's heights, where you may trek the nature trail laid out by the ranger service. Racing runabouts (lower left) circle Anacapa as an offshore turning mark. Wild life—vegetation, animals and birds abound, and the islands are a haven for herds of pinnipeds, such as this one (far right) on San Miguel. The rugged, rocky island shores (lower right) recall the Scottish Hebrides

**T**HE FOUR NORTHERN ISLANDS just off the California Coast, in the Santa Barbara Channel, have so far escaped only slightly scathed by the hand of man. Just 25 miles south of Santa Barbara and a day's sail west of Los Angeles, Anacapa, Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa and San Miguel remain immune to the plague of overpopulation. Except for a few ranchhouses and ranger stations, they are still much as the Chumash Indians found them, dwelled on them and left them when transported to mainland missions, where they eventually perished.

Ecologically unique, the archipelago is the address of the endangered California brown pelican and endemic island fox, as well as 31 kinds of plants found nowhere else in the world. Wild boar roam the oak forests. Elephant seals and sea lions haul out to mate on the beaches. Whales migrate close offshore.

Today San Miguel and Anacapa are within the jurisdiction of our National Park Service, Santa Rosa is a cattle ranch and Santa Cruz is 90% under management of the Nature Conservancy and 10% under private control. Yachtsmen may visit all the islands within the provisions of landing permits procured in advance.

#### The nearest is Anacapa

Part of Channel Islands National Monument, Anacapa alone allows shore privileges without a permit. The landing platform at Cathedral Cove offers steps leading up cliffs which drop steeply to the sea. From

there you can walk up toward the Fresnel lens-lit lighthouse (although not inside). You can trek the one and a half-mile nature trail laid out by the Park Service. Misty headlands here have the aura of the Scottish Hebrides, except that wild cucumber and bright iceplant replace the muted heather and sage and sea dahlia thrive where bracken would be. In the spring this high ground is a prime viewing point for migrating gray whales, so take ashore your ship's binoculars.

Cathedral Cove is only a day anchorage, better havens being East Fish Camp and Frenchy's Cove.

The rocky shores of Anacapa are a tidepool paradise. All life to a depth of five feet enjoys Federal protection; nothing may be removed, preferably nothing disturbed. With scuba gear the sport diver can slip beneath the surface into the nether region of the undersea. The caves and coves of Anacapa provide some of the West Coast's best 30'-60'-deep seascape. Kelp forests sway in a slow-motion breeze, lobsters peer from dark crevices and multihued nudibranchs dance among the mollusks.

The three tiny isles which comprise Anacapa can be circumnavigated in a single afternoon. Off the east end extends Arch Rock, a natural bridge 100 feet high. The west end is alive with sea fowl soaring along the cliffs which create an updraft for these natural hang-gliders. Precipitous ledges are the major rookery for California brown pelican, who share the crags with cormorants and screeching seagulls. Around the corner, Cat Rock stages

a spontaneous comedy show of seals and sea lions; in fact, here cowboys used to lasso the clever pinnipeds to sell to zoos.

#### Westernmost is San Miguel

Rarely as calm as Anacapa—rather more remote, sunbleached and bleak—is San Miguel. Exposed off California's infamous Point Conception, San Miguel is largely a landscape of sand dunes and scrubby brush. Drought and the voracious appetite of imported sheep have stunted the indigenous foliage.

In the 1930s yachtsmen anchored in Cuyler's Harbor, headquarters of 13,000-acre Rancho Rambouillet. Many enjoyed the hospitality of the Lester family which managed the semi-wild range. Dispensing evening libations from his Killer Whale Bar, Herbert Lester regaled guests with tales of mystery and mutiny, of shipwreck treasure-seekers and sheep-shearing vacuqueros, of life insulated from civilization by a swath of sea. Sovereign of an insular domain, he seemed to enjoy an idyllic existence. But in 1942, Lester shot himself, and his wife and two daughters returned to the mainland. Although Elizabeth, in her book, "The Legendary King of San Miguel," does not reveal the secrets of her husband's suicide note, the reason was rumored to be his learning of Navy plans to expropriate the strategic outpost. The rambling ranchhouse with its driftwood walls and porthole windows burned to ashes in 1969—yet another mystery.

Park Ranger Mike Hill is now the





sole resident of San Miguel. For years landing was not permitted, in order to preserve archeological sites, fragile caliche and the delicate ecosystem. But now it is possible to make reservations for a landing permit at Cuyler's, where Mike will meet a limited ten visitors per day and accompany them on a nature hike. Late spring is the finest, when winds are light and the extraordinary Giant Coreopsis blooms are in

golden abandon. Cuyler's is a viable harbor in most conditions, but occasionally even this spot proves impossible to enter, or suffers uncomfortable surge. In winter San Miguel can be as cruel as Cape Horn.

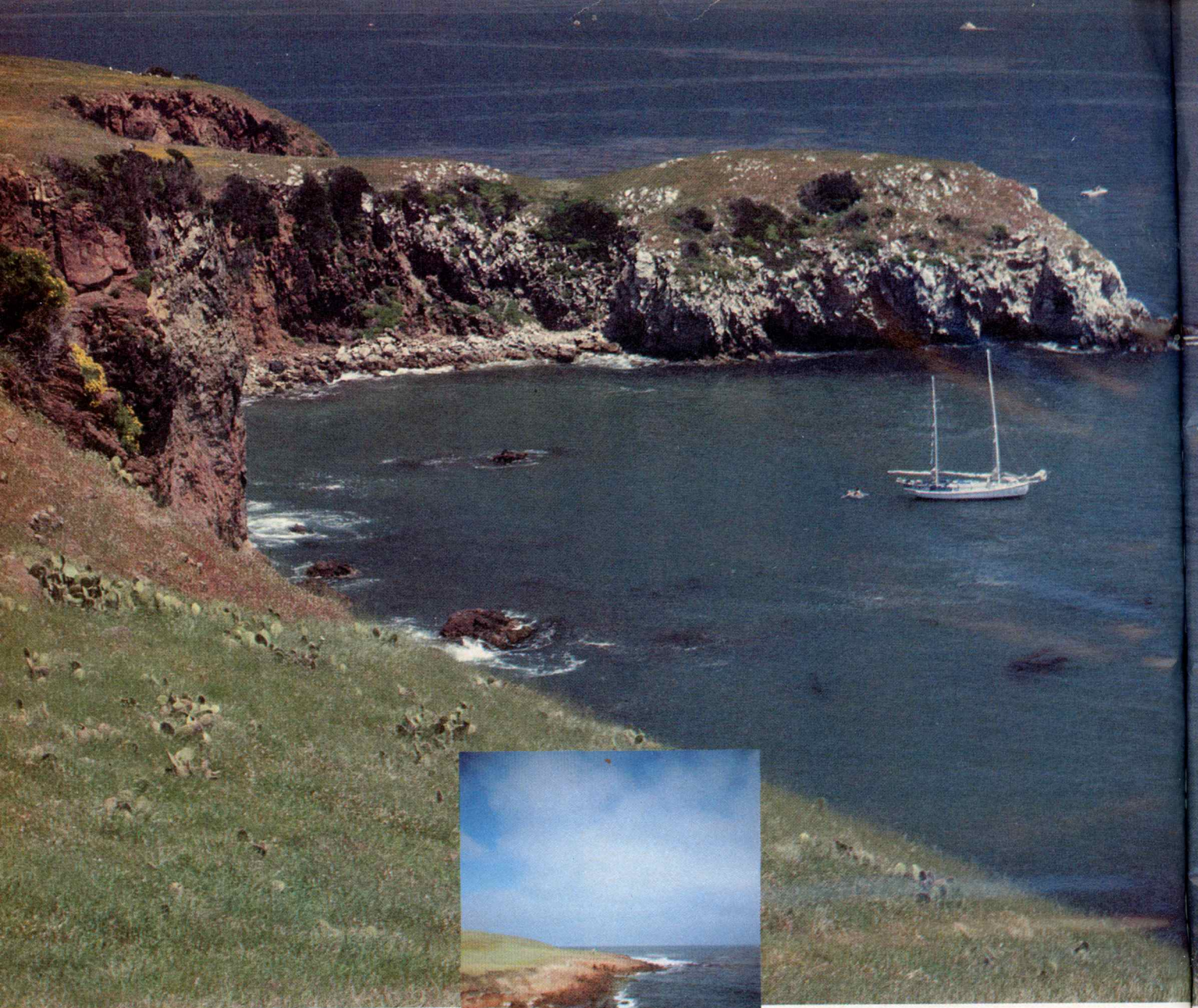
#### **Next largest is Santa Rosa**

Permit restrictions prohibit published descriptions of this private enclave. So here I may only hint at

the mist-entwined woods of rare Torrey Pine, wild fox as tame as collie pups, the rusty South Point wreck of the *S.S. Chickasaw*, or the night's quiet solitude in an anchorage all one's own.

Under the aegis of Vail & Vickers, Santa Rosa operates as one of the largest cattle ranches in America. Russel Vail informed me in no uncertain terms, "We've got a working ranch here, Ma'am. We give no





open landing permits, but do allow boating folks to come ashore for the purpose of stretching their legs. There's no fee for the permit, but provisions restrict landing to Becher's Bay, during daylight only, and the restrictions are enforced."

#### **Most hospitable Santa Cruz**

If you ever wonder what Catalina was like before it fell victim to development, this is it. Santa Cruz welcomes the weekender and persuades the voyager to tarry. The land is never twice the same. In October grass-mantled headlands appear in threadbare brown corduroy, but wear green velour in May. The fog can fold in as thick as a woolen shawl, or merely scarve the

cliffs with silk. Most often the sun wins out. Compared to the city, all is very still. The silence is creased only by the bleat of sheep retreating shyly up an arroyo, the bark of sea lions lounging on the beach, or the echo of surf sucking over rocks.

William Barron bought Santa Cruz Island in 1857 from Mexican Land Grant owner Andres Castillero. An Englishman, Barron introduced agriculture and animal husbandry to the virgin terrain. Thereafter, as the property changed

*Visiting yachts securely at anchor (above) in Hungryman's Gulch, Santa Cruz. Others seek protection from northwesterlies in Forney's Cove. It's a short walk out to Fraser Point*

hands, ranchhouses and a winery were built, olives, grapes and almonds were cultivated and sheep, cattle and pigs were raised for profit. In 1937 Edwin Stanton found the property in depression-wrought disrepair. He purchased 90%, leaving the remainder under jurisdiction of the Gherini family. Since the sixties Santa Cruz has been under the sensible management of sole heir and bachelor Carey Stanton. On July 5, 1978, the Nature Conservancy purchased Stanton's full





swatches of green and white, amber and rust, indigo and orange, the walls were painted by wave action and the seepage of mineral salts. Other caves along this vertical shore entice the rowboat explorer, but this is the most spectacular.

Pelican Cove invites the swimmer, its pellucid waters a snorkeler's joy. But beware of jellyfish drifting in on an evening tide to feed. Hike up canyons and hillsides for an expansive panorama. An ancient oak on the hill above the harbor bears the carved names and dates of boats visiting here since the 19th century. Here, too, still stand the ruins of old Ira Eaton's hotel. Fifty years ago this eccentric fellow used to ferry passengers across the channel aboard his charter, the *Sea Wolf*. His was the only attempt ever to commercialize this coast.

Prisoner's Harbor, a short hop east, is the supply landing for the Santa Cruz Island Company which runs the Stanton ranch. Yachts are welcome to anchor but may not tie up. The name of this small bight betrays its history as a penal colony. In the mid-1800s, when all this still belonged to Mexico, Spanish loyalists were given a choice of being shot or sent to California. Some opted for exile, and a shipment of 80 undesirables arrived in Santa Barbara aboard the *Maria Ester*. The citizenry shuttled them off to the island, where they eeked out an existence on meager provisions. But when fire broke out one night, panic impelled them to make their escape. On makeshift rafts they managed to paddle all the way back to the mainland, where they gradually melted into Santa Barbara's blue-blood society.

Along what local mariners refer to as the "backside" of Santa Cruz, the most popular destination is Smuggler's Cove. Boats sailing up from the fringes of Los Angeles take Anacapa to starboard, arriving here as a first pause before cruising on past Gull Island to Forney's Cove and Fraser Point. A large harbor, Smuggler's accommodates up to a hundred yachts. But if you suffer claustrophobia in crowds, seek out another nearby nook where you can sink your hook in solitude. There are many shelters along this shore,

except when a southerly howls.

Weather in this area can be tricky. Northwesterlies funnel down "windy lane" with the fury of williwaws; tropical storms sometimes send ugly seas from the south. Winter sou'easters uproot trees and anchored boats, and sometimes unexpected danger comes on days which seem at first the finest, when Santa Anas, warm desert winds out of the east or northeast, wreak their havoc. Roaring in the night with a force of 50 knots or more, they



Nancy Barron photo

Bob Grant's Cal 40 "Firebird" approaches Cueva Valdez, Santa Cruz, which is a well-protected harbor

turn placid north-facing coves into perilous lee shores. These conditions are predictable, so the prudent mariner monitors weather stations before making a passage over, and each evening while in the islands as well.

Competent navigation is imperative here. Outlying perils are unlit so that finding anchorage at night is a hazard. U.S. hydrographic charts #18720 and #18727-9 cover the territory, but cruisers caught in kelp beds or exposed to unexpected surge have long complained of the need for a detailed pilot guide. Finally, one is forthcoming in 1979: "A Cruising Guide to the Santa Barbara Channel, California," by Brian M. Fagan and Graham Pomerooy. This is a straight-forward account of every anchorage and haven of refuge in the channel. Other useful publications are: "Chart Guide for Southern California Boating, Diving and Fishing," by Edmond Winlund and "U.S. Coast Pilot No. 7."

(For addresses for landing permits, see page 216). □

55,000 acres for \$2.5 million publicly-raised for the purpose, for an ecological preserve. At an incredible \$47 per acre, it is the most phenomenal land deal since the sale of Alaska. Yachtsmen retain right of access by permit.

On the north side, numerous natural harbors offer protection from prevailing northwesterlies. Farthest to the west, and for that reason uncongested, in Cueva Valdez. This sublime little cove is the best overnight spot from which to take a day excursion around Profile Point to Painted Cave. Lie off the entrance and row in by dinghy, taking along a strong flashlight. The multi-chambered cavern beneath the cliffs is 125' high inside. Stained with

Peter C. Howorth photos